

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

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REGARDING: Grain and Agrarian centres - Italian East Africa.
A "Battle of the Grain" is being carried on in Ethiopia with a three fold objective; 1 - to obtain better cultivation so that grain may be exported eventually to the mutual advantage of the colony and the homeland; 2, - to effect rationally demographic colonization; 3, - to create an agrarian economy capable of meeting the Empire's needs.

B. Grain and Agrarian Centres.

A "Battle of the Grain", similar to the one currently carried on in the Kingdom itself, is being fought in Ethiopia. It has a threefold objective; (1) to obtain, by intelligent planning and using the best technical means available in the colony, an immediate, substantial yield keeping in mind, better cultivation so that grain may be exported eventually to the mutual advantage of the colony and the homeland; (2) to effect rationally, and in a large degree, demographic colonization, and (3) to create an agrarian economy wholly capable of meeting the Empire's needs. Direction and control in achieving these ends are concentrated in the Inspectorate of Agriculture of the Ministry for Italian Africa.

Estimates as to quantity of grain required annually by the colony run from 800,000 to one million quintals; it has been calculated that the cultivation of approximately 150,000 hectares of land will produce this yield. It is important that this amount be supplied with as little expenditure as possible for transportation. One obstacle in this respect however, is the reluctance of native farmers to produce any more grain than absolutely necessary for their own consumption. At present the problem is complicated further because many native farmers have been taken from their lands to perform manual labor on new roads and other public works. Hope is expressed that in time native psychology as regards production may be changed so that an increased total grain yield may be realized.

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This field, especially, should lend itself, with advantage, to the project for demographic colonization. Since the grain problem is regarded as fundamental and urgent, this phase of the scheme for solving it commands immediate attention and action (more concerning colonization appears later on in this report). An important step already taken toward this end has been the creation of so called "Agrarian Centres". They are selected areas set aside, by exercising the right of eminent domain, for intensive grain cultivation under the direct guidance of Italian agricultural experts. The goal is, - quantity and quality production on a combined experimental and practical basis. Instruction in improved methods of sowing, cultivating and harvesting are being and will be further disseminated among all native and Italian farmers employed in the enterprise and they will be aided in the sale and distribution of their produce along the most efficient lines developed in Ethiopia thus far. In a similar way private Italian and native farmers (i.e. those not included in "Agrarian Centres" projects) will be assisted. It is hoped that by this group alone some 200,000 quintals of grain will be produced during the coming year.

The "Agrarian Centres" operate as follows. The Colonial Government, exercising the right of eminent domain as mentioned above, through the several managers of the "Agrarian Centres" working in cooperation with the military authorities for each district, make concessions of land to managing farmers, Italian and

native,

native, selected according to experience and demonstrated ability. The concessions usually have a duration of one grain year and consist of about 500 hectares each. The superintendency (Intendenza) of each "Agrarian Centre", in addition to working out the details of the respective concessions, also distributes required farm implements, tools, beasts of burden and seeds. Furthermore, they arrange for advancing necessary working funds to the respective concessionaires. Finally, after the grain is harvested the various superintendencies act as buyers and distributors so that any waste effort and unnecessary transportation costs due to poor routing, faulty marketing and speculation may be avoided. Private Italian and native farmers, and any existing private grain dealers, are required to dispose of their surplus products through the nearest Superintendency of an "Agrarian Centre". Prices paid for the grain are fixed by the "Agrarian Centers" so that competition will be eliminated.

Already "Agrarian Centres" have been established and put into operation at Mekanissa and Furi St. Joseph (near Addis Abeba), in the Gimma section (where some 17,000 hectares of land are now under cultivation by Italian farmers, each concession in this district varying in size, by special dispensation, from 200 to 1,000 hectares and having a duration of 25 years) and at Goggiam, Gallo and Sidamo (areas inspected with expressed satisfaction just lately by the Italian Minister of Finance) and at Uebi Scebeli. Other

"centres" are in course of being established. It is said that to aid in the expedition of this work, the Fascist Confederation of Agriculture has called upon Italy's foremost agricultural experts to contribute.

Reports on the condition of the present grain crop are said to be entirely satisfactory. Quality is considered good, hard and turgid and particularly well suited for the manufacture of alimentary pastes, an important item in the national diet. The grain throughout the Colony, except for that on some of the hilly slopes of Mount Ucciocia, near Addis Abeba and around Acachi, is said to be in a good state of ripening. Predictions for the yield at this time are about six quintals average per hectare; however it is estimated that for the second (coming) year this may reach an average of eight quintals. Some 30,000 quintals have been harvested thus far and shipped to the Italian market; another 18,000 quintals possibly may be gathered from those native farmers who have produced more grain than necessary for their domestic needs in exchange for products in which they are deficient. The several operations involved in realizing this year's yield have been carried out under the "Agrarian Centres" plan with the exception of a few scattered instances.

This first result, of little material value at the moment, is thought to augur well for the future. The next grain year starts at the end of June 1938. From the Italian and native farmers who will conduct their activities in "Agrarian Centres" over that period it is hoped that approximately 700,000 quintals

of grain will be obtained, - a quantity almost sufficient to meet the present demand of the colony.

Agricultural experts tell us that the "Battle of the Grain" will be won only after two grain years have passed (incidentally, this is the reported expectation of the Duce) that it is too much to expect a victory in one season in a new territory where, obviously, great obstacles must be overcome. Apart from this predicted material benefit, involving an eventual expansion of related industries, writers on this phase of the general autarchic program call attention to the probable political profit Italy may expect. They feel that native farmers, working in close cooperation and harmony with Italians engaged in agricultural pursuits, will recognize in the latter a true pioneer spirit replete with sterling masterful qualities in the arts of peace as well as in those of war. They state that this contact and the resulting native reaction undoubtedly will greatly assist in constructive pacification of the country and a healthy political situation.

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